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Japan offered EU compromise over ITER

(Kyodo) _ Japan offered the European Union a compromise in their stalled negotiations over an international nuclear fusion reactor project, including carrots of 50 billion yen in work for European companies, Japanese government sources said Tuesday.

Japan made the offer in September in a bid to break the deadlock over whether Japan or France will host the reactor. But the European Union made a similar counterproposal last month, and the two parties have yet to reach a breakthrough, the sources said.

Japan said in its proposal that it is ready to offer about 50 billion yen worth of construction jobs to companies within the EU member countries if Japan hosts ITER, the sources said.

ITER is expected to cost a total of about 579 billion yen for construction and operation.

In preceding talks, the parties agreed the winner will undertake half of the cost and place orders for the project to companies based in its territory.

Japan also proposed constructing a related research facility within the EU area, committing to half of the roughly 92 billion yen construction cost for the research facility, and employing researchers for the ITER project equally from Japan and the European Union, the sources said.

The European Union says it will go ahead with its own plan to construct ITER on its own with supporting countries if the ongoing talks fail to reach an agreement.

Meanwhile, Japan says its proposal is superior because the EU plan lacks clear references to its budget for the project.

China, the European Union, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States have agreed to collaborate on the ITER project but have been unable to agree on the site to build the reactor.

While the United States and South Korea support the Japanese proposal to build the reactor in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, China and Russia support the EU proposal to build it in Cadarache, France.

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